



Introduction to the Holocaust

Writing a Diamante Poem





Name: Gerda Weissman

Date of Birth: May 8, 1924

Place of Birth: Bielsko, Poland

Gerda was born to a Jewish middle-class family in Bielsko, Poland, town noted for its textile industry. She began her education at a public school, but later was permitted to come into a Catholic girls school. Her father was instructed the Jewish religion and in religious studies.

1933-39: On Friday, September 1, 1939, German fighter planes appeared overhead, causing many people to flee the city. My family remained and lived through the intense shelling that followed on Sunday evening. In the morning we heard a tremendous roar. Two German soldiers raced up the street on a motorcycle. We heard people shouting "Heil Hitler" and a black, white and red swastika flag suddenly fluttered from a window across the street.

1940-45: After being moved to Bielsko's ghetto, I was deported in 1942 to work in a textile mill in Bolkenhain, Silesia. Despite the hunger and backbreaking labor, there was caring among the inmates. A German supervisor, Mrs. Kupler, even saved my life. I'd fallen ill and gone to the camp hospital. Mrs. Kupler knew that an SS man was inspecting and that the sick would be gassed. She dragged me back to the factory, started my loom and set me in front of it. I was delicious from fever, but I passed the inspection.

Gerda was later sent to slave-labor camps in Marzdorf, Landsbut and Gruenberg. She was liberated by the American Army in May 1945, and emigrated to the United States in 1946.

IDENTIFICATION CARD

For the dead and the living we must bear witness



United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum



Gerda Weissmann

Born 1924
Bielsko, Poland

Gerda was born to a Jewish family in Bielsko, Poland. She began her education in Polish public school but later entered a Catholic girls' school. A rabbi was permitted to come to the school and instruct the Jewish students in religious studies.

On September 1, 1939, Nazi Germany invaded Poland. German fighter planes appeared overhead, and many people fled Bielsko. Gerda's family remained and lived through the intense shelling that followed. The next morning they heard people shouting "Heil Hitler!" and a black, white, and red swastika flag suddenly fluttered from a window across the street. The Germans occupying Bielsko forced Jews, including the Weissmanns, to give up their homes and move to a newly established ghetto.

In **1942**, Gerda was deported to work in a textile mill in Bolkenhain (Bolków), in southern Poland. Despite the hunger and backbreaking labor, the inmates of the camp cared for each other. At one point, Gerda was almost killed. She had fallen ill and went to the infirmary. A German supervisor, Mrs. Kugler, realized that there would be an inspection of the inmates, and she dragged Gerda back to the factory. Although Gerda was delirious from fever, she passed the inspection. Mrs. Kugler's actions likely saved Gerda's life.

Gerda was later sent to slave-labor camps in Marzdorf, Landshut, and Gruenberg. She was liberated by the American army in May 1945 and immigrated to the United States in 1946.

Diamante Poem Sample

Gerda
Jewish, happy
Learning, studying, growing
Liberated by the American army
Starving, slaving, caring
Sick, fortunate
Survivor



Diamante Poem Format

Line A: A (must be a noun)

Line B: Two vivid adjectives that describe A

Line C: Three interesting “-ing” action verbs that describe A

Line D: A powerful phrase that ties together

Line E: Three interesting “-ing” action verbs that describe G

Line F: Two vivid adjectives that describe G

Line G: G (must be a noun)

